

FRIENDLY ADVICE ON LEARNING TO PLAY THE GUITAR

Hi Folks! We at **Wires'N Wood** have thought long and hard about how to begin a tutorial on learning to play the guitar and came to the conclusion that we should start at the beginning. Before you start to learn chords, before you even purchase your instrument, there are a few things that you should consider very seriously.

1: Who's going to be learning the instrument? If this person is you then you should have a pretty good idea if you are actually serious about learning to play the instrument. If, however, it is one of your children I advise that you sit down with him or her and ask this person if this is what that person really wants to do. In either case it should be understood that this is a serious commitment and will require a lot of time, effort, patience, dedication, and hard work. It will not be accomplished quickly or easily. In order to learn an instrument you don't have to have a special talent but you do need to be driven to learn to play the guitar.

2: Don't waste a lot of money on your first instrument. Even if the person in question thinks that he or she really wants to learn to play guitar, that doesn't guarantee that they will have the dedication or drive to carry this task through to a successful completion. Lots of people set about to learn an instrument only to give up on it when they realize that it takes more time and effort than they first believed. It always looks simple when you watch someone who knows what they're doing. I'm not trying to discourage you from taking up this worthwhile endeavor. I'm simply advising not to invest too much money until you can see that there are some signs that the student is making sufficient progress.

A cheap guitar may not sound as good as a more expensive model but, properly set up, it should be as easy to learn to play on. Once the student has learned a few chords and some strumming techniques and is showing some promise, then maybe it's time to invest in a better quality guitar.

3: Do it right from the start: Before you leave the music store make these few small investments. Ask the store owner, (assuming your not buying from a general retail store like WAL-MART), to set up the action on your new guitar. Music shops often get their instruments pre-setup from the manufacturer. Often the action on these instruments is not set-up very well. This will result in the strings being too high or too low on the Fret Board. This will cause the instrument to be either very difficult to play or the strings buzzing against the Frets. A beginner is going to have enough difficulty learning to play an instrument, without bad action adding to this task. They probably will do this for free if you just bought the instrument from them. If you did buy your guitar from a

Box Store like Wal-Mart I suggest that you immediately take your new instrument down to a music shop and pay to get this done. It may cost a little but it's worth it.

Also invest in a tuner and or pitch pipe. I recommend both as a tuner is far more accurate than a pitch pipe and will tell you if your string is a little flat or sharp, but it will not tell you if you are tuning it to the correct note for that string. A pitch pipe will do this. My favorite electric tuner is an Intelli-600 tuner. These are very easy to use.

Every guitar kit ought to include a string winder. This cheap little plastic tool saves oodles of time winding the strings around the tuner peg and is the only tool I recommend for removing bridge pins when changing strings.



If you have invested a significant amount of money in purchasing your guitar then you should invest in a hard shell case to protect it. These can cost around \$100.00 so I wouldn't buy one for a cheap guitar.

You will likely want to buy one or two beginner guitar lesson books as well.

4: Take good care of your instrument. Even if you bought a cheap guitar and intend to replace it as soon as you begin to start learning more advanced techniques keep in mind that you may wish to sell you old instrument at that point and recoup some of your initial investment to put towards your new guitar. Second hand guitars don't usually fetch a very good price. If they're in poor, shape they are unsellable.

Serious musicians are often very attached to their instrument. They look upon their guitar as an extension of themselves. I have almost every guitar that I have ever bought. I just can't bring my self to part with any of them. If you take good care of an instrument it can and likely will last a very long time.

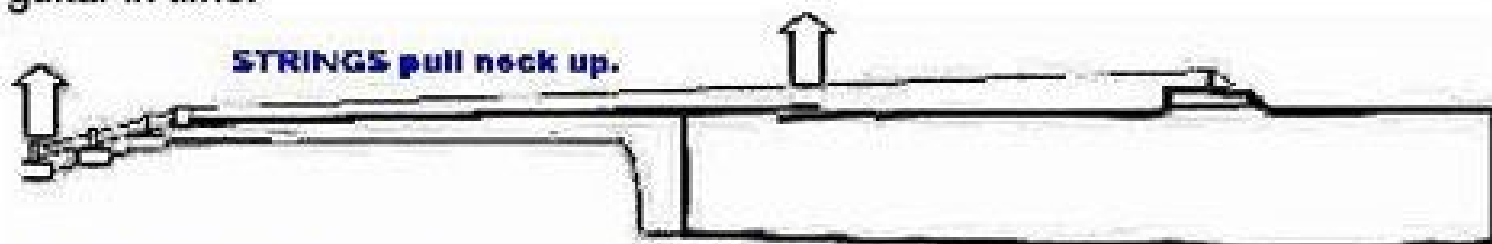
Do keep your instrument in proper and standard tune, (an electric tuner is helpful for this). If your guitar is gets extremely out of tune for a long period of time, (i.e. while it is in storage), the neck can possibly become warped.

Do keep your guitar in its case when it's not in use. A hard shell case will protect a guitar from significant bumps and scratches.

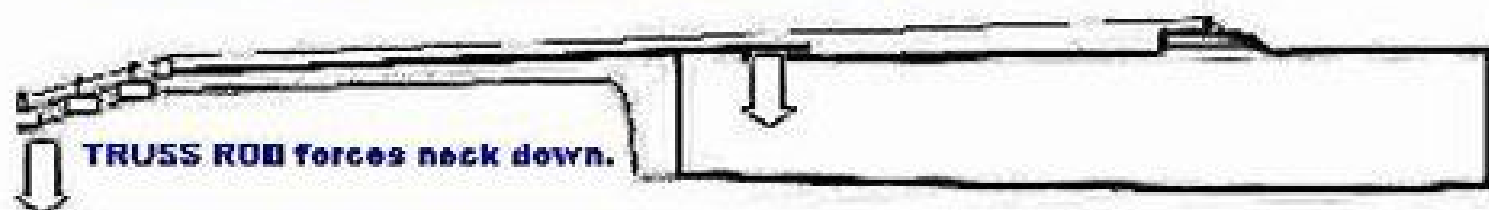
Do use a string winder to pull out the bridge pins of your guitar when changing guitar strings. A string winder has a special tool at the end of it to lift the plastic bridge pins out of the bridge. I once used pliers for this task and marred my bridge pins all to heck.

Do NOT loosen the strings on your guitar before storing it for any extended period of time. Some people are under the misconception that this will take the stress off the neck of the instrument but in fact the opposite is true. The Truss Rod of a guitar counters the stress placed on the neck by the tension of

the strings. Loosen off the strings and the Truss Rod will warp the neck of your guitar in time.



When the TRUSS ROD is properly adjusted it counters the stress on the neck caused by the STRINGS.



Do NOT use anything other than light gauge strings when replacing the strings on your guitar. There are medium and heavy gauge strings available but these grades of strings generally put too much stress on the neck of most guitars and over time can cause the neck to warp or the top to lift. After the first time you change your strings to light gauge you may need to get the neck action set up again.

Do NOT remove all of the strings of your guitar at once when doing a complete change of strings. Change one string at a time starting either at the bottom or top string and working your way up or down.

Do NOT leave or store your guitar anywhere that exposes the instrument to any extreme cold or hot temperature. Don't leave your instrument in the car for very long in the winter or lying in the sun in the summer. This can, and likely will, cause the wood to crack.

Do NOT leave your instrument anywhere that exposes it to extremes in humidity. Extremely dry or moist air can cause the wood of your instrument to crack or warp. A warped neck can be unrepairable .

5: Take the correct attitude into learning your craft.

Remember that you can. Never assume that you can't. Never be satisfied with what you have learned. Always seek to learn new tricks. The more that you know how to do the better your music will sound. All the talent in the world can not make up for a lack of practice.